

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q. To whom do District regional transportation planners send draft regional transportation plans (RTPs) for review?

A. Like the OWPs, the Districts route draft RTPs to those in the Department who need to know what is proposed and who need to have the opportunity to react to it. The District planner makes the decision as s/he completes the initial review. Some examples are: other Planning Branches, Traffic Operations, Local Assistance, Community Planning, the modal programs and Research and Innovation and DOTP in Headquarters.

Q. The Regional Transportation Planning Agency (RTPA) in our rural county has not spent its Rural Planning Assistance (RPA) funds as quickly as expected and will have an unspent balance of \$6000 on June 30. Can we use this \$6000 next year?

A. No. RPA funds cannot be carried over. They are available from July 1 through June 30. If they are not spent during that time, they lapse. It is very important for District planners to carefully monitor RPA expenditures. If it seems an RTPA cannot spend all its RPA by June 30, the Office of Regional and Interagency Planning (ORIP) liaison should be contacted immediately. It is possible that another RTPA may have good use for these funds, or these funds might be spent for something of benefit to all rural RTPAs. If all involved parties agree, these funds can be redirected for use by another RTPA, prior to June 30.

Q. The Overall Work Program Agreement (OWPA) does not have a line for Transportation Development Act (TDA) funds. Where do we list them on the OWPA?

A. TDA funds are not included in the OWPA. The OWPA is only for funds administered through the Office of Regional and Interagency Planning (ORIP). These funds include the state Rural Planning Assistance (RPA) and federal Consolidated Planning Grant (CPG) funds. The CPG includes FHWA Metropolitan Planning (PL), FTA Metropolitan Planning Section 5303 (§ 5303), FHWA State Planning and Research – Partnership Planning Element; and, FTA State Planning and Research Section 5313(b) (§ 5313(b)). Contact the Division of Mass Transportation for more information about TDA encumbrance documents and invoicing procedures.

Q. Last December's *OWP Guidance* reflected that our county received \$41,000 in RPA. In mid-July, our ORIP liaison told us we would receive \$45,000. How much RPA will our county get?

A. They will get \$45,000. The RPA amounts in the *OWP Guidance* are estimates. The amount the ORIP liaison stated was the actual RPA, after passage of the State Budget. At present, the total amount of RPA available to rural counties is \$4 million per fiscal year, divided among the 28 rural RTPAs (which will be reduced to 26 RTPAs when Kings and Madera become MPOs around July 2003). This money is available only after passage of the State Budget, providing the Budget includes RPA. The amount each RTPA receives is based on its population. The estimate in the *OWP Guidance* uses population numbers from the previous fiscal year. The Department of Finance publishes new

population numbers in January. If there are significant population changes, the RPA calculation will need to be revised. This may result in an increase or decrease in the amount of RPA the RTPA will actually receive.

Q. Our ORIP liaison told us our Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) could not spend FHWA Metropolitan Planning (PL) funds to prepare a Project Study Report (PSR) for one of the actions listed in our approved Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). If it is in our RTP, what is the problem?

A. Planning funds like PL, § 5303 and RPA can only be used for planning activities. A PSR is part of project development. The MPO needs to use other funds to develop a PSR, for example, Planning, Programming and Monitoring (PPM). MPOs can use up to 1 percent of their State Transportation Improvement Plan (STIP) money for PPM, and RTPAs who do not get federal metropolitan planning funds (PL and § 5303) can use up to 5 percent of STIP money for PPM. PPM can be used either for planning activities or for project development. (AB 608, effective January 1, 2002, increased PPM for MPOs from ½ percent to 1 percent, and for RTPAs who do not get federal metropolitan planning funds from 2 percent to 5 percent.)

Q. Who generates the Quarterly Progress and Expenditures Report and what is its purpose?

A. The Quarterly Progress and Expenditures Report is generated by the MPO/RTPA. It is a tool to monitor Overall Work Program (OWP) activity and expenditure progress. In addition to attending MPO/RTPA advisory committee meetings, serving on task forces/technical advisory committees, and tracking invoices (Requests for Reimbursement), District planning staff can use these reports as another way to review whether the regional agency is completing work on its OWP and is invoicing reimbursement for these activities accurately and in a timely manner. If the agency is behind schedule, an OWP amendment might be needed.

Each quarter, the Districts send copies of these reports to the ORIP liaison. After the end of the fiscal year, the Districts also send the MPO's reports to FHWA, which shares them with FTA.

Q. Our MPO/RTPA just submitted its draft RTP to the District. What does the District Regional Planning do with it?

A. District Regional Planning is responsible for the initial review of the RTP. Based upon its review, the District determines who else in Caltrans needs to review it. Most draft RTPs should be routed for comment to e.g., District Traffic Operations, the District Local Assistance Engineer, Community Planning in both the District and Headquarters, Mass Transit, Research and Innovation, Aeronautics, other planning offices in both the District and Headquarters; and any other function in the District or Headquarters which is impacted by the draft RTP.

District Regional Planning compiles all Caltrans' comments on the draft RTP in a single comprehensive comment letter to the MPO/RTPA. Additionally, the District Regional Planning staff is responsible for assuring the RTP environmental document is reviewed.

RTPs are projects under the California Environmental Quality Act. It is recommended District Regional Planning staff always review the environmental document. Whether District Regional Planning staff has the responsibility to review the environmental document for the RTP or whether it is reviewed by another unit in the District (e.g., IGR/CEQA), District Regional Planning staff needs to make sure someone in the District reviews it. District Regional Planning staff should always be familiar with the environmental document even if someone else is responsible for reviewing and commenting on it.

Q. Should the Districts share the *OWP Guidance* with the MPOs and RTPAs?

A. Yes. The *OWP Guidance* is prepared for the benefit of the Districts and the regional agencies. ORIP provides copies to the Districts with the understanding that the Districts will distribute copies to the MPOs and RTPAs.

At the request of the Rural Counties Task Force, ORIP began preparing two versions of the *OWP Guidance*, one for the MPOs and one for the RTPAs, in the 2001/2002 cycle. District staff should be sure to provide the regional agencies with the applicable version.

Q. Does the OWP have to be amended if funding amounts change?

A. Yes. The OWP must accurately reflect what transportation planning work will be done and how much that work will cost. When either of those changes, the OWP needs to be amended to keep it accurate. If the total amount of ORIP-administered funds in the OWP changes, the OWPA also needs to be amended.

Q Why do the MPOs sometimes get more (or less) FHWA Metropolitan Planning (PL) than is shown in the *OWP Guidance*?

A. The *OWP Guidance* is prepared in November or December for the next state fiscal year (FY), which is July 1 through June 30. The federal FY is October 1 through September 30 and the federal budget, which provides the exact amount of PL is passed around October 1, i.e., three months after the July 1 effective date of the OWP. The PL amount listed in the *OWP Guidance* is the current year's total, which should be fairly close to what will be available for next year. When the actual PL amounts are known, the OWP needs to be amended to show extra work to be done if the PL amount increases or to delete work if the amount decreases.

Because this amendment changes the total amount of PL in the OWP, the OWPA needs to be amended too.

Q. Why does ORIP need three copies of the Final OWP?

A. ORIP requires an office file copy, a liaison desk (working) copy, and one copy is available for lending to other units and functions. ORIP also requests an electronic copy to facilitate lending. In future cycles, if the regional agencies agree, Final OWPs may be posted on the ORIP website.

Q. How many original OWPA's are needed and who gets them?

A. The ORIP Fund Administrator retains the original OWPA signed by the MPO/RTPA and the District. The original should be signed in blue ink to make it easily distinguishable from photocopies. The District retains a photocopy of the fully executed original and provides a photocopy thereof to the MPO/RTPA. If the District and/or the MPO/RTPA also require originals, more than one original can be generated.

Q. Who signs the OWPA?

A. Generally, the Chair of the MPO/RTPA Governing Board and the District Director sign the OWPA. The MPO/RTPA Board may delegate signature authority, in writing, to someone other than the Chairperson. Such delegations are often fairly generic, so District regional planners need to review them carefully to verify that the authorization applies to the OWPA. The District Director may delegate signature authority to the Deputy District Director for Planning and Public Transportation.

Q. The OWPs and the OWPA's are only good for one year. Do we also need to execute a new Master Fund Transfer Agreement (MFTA) every year?

A. The MFTA includes or references state and federal provisions, with which the MPOs/RTPAs must comply. Because it is usually valid for multiple years, it only needs to be executed once, when it is originally entered into. If it is revised, the revision document needs to be executed. If the revision is very minor, e.g., just changing a single word or number, it may simply be initialed by all the signatories. Annual specifics are added through the OWP and the OWPA.

Q. Where can I get an electronic copy of the OWPA form?

A. The current MPO and RTPA OWPA forms are posted on the ORIP website. They are also available through the District's liaison in ORIP.

Q. Who is responsible for completing the OWPA?

A. It depends upon the procedures established by the District and the regional agency. In some cases, the Districts complete the form and send it to the regional agency for signature. Other Districts forward the form to the regional agencies for completion and the OWPA, signed by the MPO/RTPA is returned to the District for District signature. The District forwards the fully executed original OWPA to the District's liaison in ORIP.

Q. How is mandatory local match calculated on the OWPA?

A. For federal sources requiring an 11.47% local match, the total amount of each federal source is divided by .8853. The resultant amount is then multiplied by .1147. The product is the mandatory local match. This calculation applies to FHWA PL, FTA §5303, and FTA § 5313(b).

For FHWA State Planning and Research – Partnership Planning Element, which requires a 20% local match, the amount of this grant is divided by .80. The resultant amount is then multiplied by .20. The product is the mandatory local match.

Some work elements may include more local money than the mandatory local match, i.e., more than the minimum amount of local contribution. This is sometimes referred to as “over match.” If there is overmatch in any work elements, the total of local money shown in the OWP may be more than the “mandatory” local match. However, only the mandatory (i.e., minimum) local match amount will be listed on the OWPA.

Q. Why do the total amounts of each ORIP-administered funding source on the OWPA need to match the totals in the OWP?

A. The OWP and the OWPA, along with the Master Fund Transfer Agreement, are part of an annual contract between Department and the MPO/RTPA. If the amounts of ORIP-administered funding listed in the OWP are greater than the amounts reflected on the OWPA, then insufficient funds will be encumbered and there will not be enough money to complete all activities listed in the OWP. If the amount on the OWPA is greater than the amount of ORIP-administered funding in the OWP, there are not activities to account for all the funds.

Without consistent amounts tied to specific activities, the MPO/RTPA, the District Regional Planner and the ORIP liaison cannot successfully monitor expenditures. Monitoring expenditures is a critical Department and District regional transportation planning responsibility.

Q. Only MPOs get federal PL and § 5303. What about the other federal planning funds, e.g., State Planning and Research – Partnership Planning Element and § 5313(b)? Can RTPAs get those funds? How?

A. Both PL and § 5303, called metropolitan planning funds, are allocated to MPOs using formulas agreed to by FHWA/FTA, Caltrans and the regions. Because the funds are intended to fund planning in urbanized areas, those RTPAs, which are not also MPOs, are not eligible for them. However, State Planning and Research – Partnership Planning Element and § 5313(b) are grant funds awarded to those entities who submit the most competitive grant applications. So RTPAs are eligible. Each year, Caltrans sends out a request for proposal grant application package with information about applying for those grants. The most recent version is posted on the Office of Regional and Interagency Planning website.

Last Updated February 2003